

September 19, 2001

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Bush:

I write to propose that you convene a special White House/Congressional meeting with representatives of the Arab American and South Asian American communities as well as Muslim clergy to discuss the burgeoning problem of hate crimes against people in these communities and emphasize the distinctly American themes of tolerance and pluralism. I have mentioned this proposal to Attorney General Ashcroft. He agreed that it was a useful proposal and suggested that I pass it on to you directly.

As you know, millions of Arab Americans, South Asian Americans and American Muslims around the country have shared our sorrow and outrage at last Tuesday's terrorist attacks. They have donated their blood, their money, their food and their time to the rescue and recovery efforts at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It is tragic that these same individuals who have mourned and prayed with us have come under suspicion by their neighbors and the threat of additional violence in the form of hate crimes at their homes, schools, community centers and mosques. As a part of our efforts to protect America from violence, we must unequivocally condemn the attacks against these groups and pledge to protect their civil rights and civil liberties, and I wholeheartedly applaud the actions that your Administration has taken in this regard.

My district is home to one of the largest Arab and Muslim communities in the country. I believe it is vital that we distinguish the beliefs of these Americans from the perpetrators of last Tuesday's violence, and recognize that American Muslims share our values and contribute significantly to our communities. If we fail to do so, we will have seriously undermined freedom - the same principle we find ourselves vigorously defending in the wake of last week's attacks.

As we learned from the shameful history of internment of Japanese-Americans during World War Two, the civil rights and civil liberties of discrete groups of minorities should be specially considered during times of domestic and international turmoil. Our sense of

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community with fellow Americans of Arab and South Asian decent and those of the Muslim faith should not be counted as another casualty of Tuesday's senseless violence.

Please let me know if I can be of any assistance in facilitating such a joint White House/Congressional meeting. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable F. James Sensenbrenner
The Honorable John D. Ashcroft
The Honorable Ralph F. Boyd, Jr.
The Honorable Daniel J. Bryant